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ABSTRACT

The DELTA program of the Austin Independent School District (AISD) (Texas) is an open-entry, open-exit competency-based diploma program in 10 high schools that is designed to help recover former dropouts and to prevent students who are at risk from dropping out. Instruction in the program is individualized and self-paced, but goals for the DELTA program are aligned with other AISD academic programs. In 1997-98, the third year of program operation, the DELTA program served 858 male and 766 female students. Nearly half (47%) were Hispanic Americans, and 20% were African Americans. Evaluation of the DELTA program shows that the number of students served by the program continued to increase in the third year. During its 3 years of operation the program has served increasing numbers of seniors, who need fewer credits to graduate, and this has contributed to a decrease in the number of credits earned by program participants. Findings of the evaluation indicate that the DELTA program is successfully meeting the goals of serving the target population and helping recovered and prevented dropouts stay in school and earn high school diplomas. Recommendations are made for program improvement. These include improvement of data collection techniques to evaluate the program's impact more thoroughly. (Contains three figures.) (SLD)

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ED 426 113

# FEEDBACK

Austin Independent School Dstrict Pub. No. 97.14

# DELTA PROGRAM
## Third Year Implementation

Holly Williams

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# FEEDBACK

## DELTA PROGRAM
### THIRD YEAR IMPLEMENTATION

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**Program History**

In the spring of 1995, Austin ISD originally piloted NovaNET, a computer-based education system, at W.R. Robbins High School. The next fall, NovaNET was combined with district curriculum through the Diversified Education through Leadership, Technology, and Academics (DELTA) program, and each of the ten Austin high schools implemented the program. Currently, the DELTA program serves students at each of the ten high schools. The goal of this open-entry, open-exit competency-based diploma program remains to help recover former dropouts and to prevent students who are at risk from dropping out. Instruction in the program is individualized and self-paced. During the 1997-98 school year, lab schedules were varied for each campus to accommodate as many students as possible. Also, goals for the DELTA curricula were aligned with:

- Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS),
- Essential Elements (EE), Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS),
- Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS),
- end-of-course exams,
- Indicator's of Program Quality (IPQs),
- district competencies, concepts, and content,
- School-to-career pathways.

**Students Served**

Table 1 contains demographic data for DELTA students by gender and ethnicity. The program has served relatively equal proportions of male and female students over three years, but the proportion of Hispanic students participating in the program has increased over the past two years. Table 2 represents additional demographic data on the population served. In 1995-96, more than half of students served (53%) were seniors; this percentage decreased slightly to 46% for 1997-98. As shown in the table, over the program's three years of operation, approximately two-thirds of the students served were overage for grade, and approximately one-third were from low-income families. Nearly half of all students served were in the twelfth grade.

Table 1: Number and Percentage for Gender and Ethnicity, 1995-98

| | Male | Female | African-American | Native American | White/ Other | Asian | Hispanic |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1997-98 | 858 (53%) | 766 (47%) | 317 (20%) | 6 (.3%) | 508 (31%) | 32 (2%) | 761 (47%) |
| 1996-97 | 735 (48%) | 783 (52%) | 348 (23%) | 4 (.03%) | 479 (32%) | 20 (1%) | 667 (43%) |
| 1995-96 | 517 (52%) | 470 (48%) | 238 (24%) | 2 (.2%) | 342 (35%) | 15 (2%) | 391 (40%) |

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Table 2: Number and Percentage of Students Overage, LEP, Low Income, and Grade, 1995-98

| | Overage | LEP | Low Income | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1997-98 | 972 | 66 | 584 | 299 | 237 | 297 | 791 |
| | (60%) | (4%) | (36%) | (18%) | (15%) | (18%) | (49%) |
| 1996-97 | 1,003 | 46 | 535 | 254 | 260 | 296 | 697 |
| | (66%) | (3%) | (35%) | (16%) | (17%) | (20%) | (46%) |
| 1995-96 | 610 | 25 | 338 | 140 | 133 | 190 | 520 |
| | (61%) | (3%) | (34%) | (14%) | (14%) | (19%) | (53%) |

Note: Totals by grade are as of the end of the school year. Some students may have been promoted to a higher grade during the year due to credit accrual.

Table 3 contains the total number and the percentage of students served by target population and by school for 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98. For the 1997-98 school year, the number of students served ranged from 55 to 286. With labs open for a full day and four of the ten high schools serving students in evening classes, the number of students served increased by more than 60% from 1995-96 to 1997-98. Of the 1,624 students enrolled in the DELTA program in 1997-98, 29% were former dropouts, 66% were considered prevented dropouts (formerly referred to as at-risk). Totals do not equal the number of students served as some students are not among the target population. Although students have been served through the DELTA program in the summers, any credits earned in the 1998 summer school program are not included in this report.

Table 3: Total Number and Percentage of Total Students Served by Type and Campus, 1995-98

| | Number Served | | | Recovered Dropout | | | Prevented Dropout | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 |
| Anderson | 89 | 125 | 143 | 31 | 32 | 36 | 43 | 79 | 96 |
| | | | | (35%) | (26%) | (25%) | (48%) | (63%) | (67%) |
| Austin | 85 | 163 | 169 | 19 | 14 | 14 | 41 | 139 | 146 |
| | | | | (22%) | (9%) | (8%) | (48%) | (85%) | (86%) |
| Bowie | 112 | 183 | 259 | 32 | 48 | 94 | 56 | 85 | 144 |
| | | | | (29%) | (26%) | (36%) | (50%) | (46%) | (56%) |
| Crockett | 38 | 134 | 138 | 18 | 28 | 16 | 19 | 44 | 64 |
| | | | | (47%) | (21%) | (12%) | (50%) | (33%) | (46%) |
| Johnston | 48 | 106 | 83 | 31 | 49 | 10 | 10 | 34 | 52 |
| | | | | (65%) | (46%) | (12%) | (21%) | (32%) | (63%) |
| Lanier | 180 | 211 | 286 | 148 | 69 | 89 | 9 | 139 | 203 |
| | | | | (82%) | (33%) | (31%) | (5%) | (66%) | (71%) |
| LBJ | 24 | 104 | 55 | 8 | 42 | 17 | 11 | 62 | 39 |
| | | | | (33%) | (40%) | (30%) | (46%) | (60%) | (71%) |
| McCallum | 125 | 140 | 127 | 123 | 65 | 58 | 1 | 63 | 66 |
| | | | | (98%) | (46%) | (46%) | (1%) | (45%) | (52%) |
| Reagan | 168 | 204 | 139 | 72 | 76 | 67 | 42 | 111 | 79 |
| | | | | (43%) | (37%) | (48%) | (25%) | (54%) | (57%) |
| Travis | 118 | 148 | 225 | 36 | 42 | 75 | 37 | 38 | 187 |
| | | | | (31%) | (28%) | (33%) | (31%) | (26%) | (83%) |
| TOTAL | 987 | 1,518 | 1,624 | 518 | 465 | 476 | 269 | 794 | 1,076 |
| | | | | (52%) | (31%) | (29%) | (27%) | (52%) | (66%) |

Note: Empty cells indicate that there were no students in this category.



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In Table 4, the number of students served is repeated and the number (and average number) of credits earned, and the number (and percentage) of diplomas awarded to DELTA students by high school are presented.

Table 4: Number of Students Served, Total Number and Average Number of Credits Earned, and Number and Percentage of Graduates, 1995-98

| | Number Served | | | Credits Earned (Average Credits Earned) | | | High School Graduates | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 |
| **Anderson** | 89 | 125 | 143 | 334 (4) | 234.5 (1.9) | 251.5 (1.8) | 24 (27%) | 41 (33%) | 51 (36%) |
| **Austin** | 85 | 163 | 169 | 129 (2) | 105.5 (.65) | 250 (1.5) | 16 (19%) | 31 (19%) | 65 (38%) |
| **Bowie*** | 112 | 183 | 259 | 174.5 (2) | 172 (.94) | 264 (1) | 35 (31%) | 51 (28%) | 94 (36%) |
| **Crockett** | 38 | 134 | 138 | 77 (2) | 182 (1.4) | 152 (1.1) | 15 (40%) | 43 (32%) | 46 (33%) |
| **Johnston** | 48 | 106 | 83 | 15.5 (.32) | 28 (.26) | 36.5 (.4) | 4 (8%) | 10 (9%) | 22 (27%) |
| **Lanier*** | 180 | 211 | 286 | 639 (4) | 360 (1.7) | 641.5* (2.2) | 75 (42%) | 84 (40%) | 110 (38%) |
| **LBJ** | 24 | 104 | 55 | 59.5 (3) | 47.5 (.46) | 49 (.9) | 5 (21%) | 12 (12%) | 17 (31%) |
| **McCallum** | 125 | 140 | 127 | 701.5 (6) | 234 (1.7) | 792 (6.2) | 56 (45%) | 34 (24%) | 67 (53%) |
| **Reagan*** | 168 | 204 | 139 | 297 (2) | 190.5 (.93) | 201 (1.4) | 54 (32%) | 66 (32%) | 55 (40%) |
| **Travis*** | 118 | 148 | 225 | 79.5 (.67) | 123 (.83) | 143.5 (.6) | 26 (22%) | 31 (21%) | 41 (18%) |
| **TOTAL** | 987 | 1,518 | 1,624 | 2,507 (3) | 1,677 (1.1) | 2,781 (1.7) | 310 (31%) | 403 (27%) | 568 (35%) |

* Schools offering evening classes.

Credits for co-op courses included in this total.

The number of students served increased from 987 in 1995-96 to 1,624 in 1997-98. The number of students receiving a high school diploma also increased, from 310 to 568, and the number of students receiving a GED remained the same. In 1997-98, the program effectively ceased granting GED certificates and concentrated on graduating students through the diploma program.

The average number of per student credits earned decreased from three credits in 1995-96 to 1.7 in 1997-98. This decrease was due in part to the program serving increased numbers of seniors who needed fewer credits in order to graduate than underclassmen (see Table 2). For the third consecutive year, more than 25% of the students served in the program graduated with a high school diploma. During the 1997-98 school year, more than 25% of DELTA program students graduated at nine of the District's ten high schools.

## Target Population

Looking at the targeted population of recovered dropouts and prevented dropouts (at-risk students) only, Table 5 reveals the number of these students served, the total and average number of credits earned, and the number and percentage of high school diplomas awarded.

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Table 5: Number and Percentage of Total Enrollment of Recovered and Prevented Dropouts Served, Total and Average Number of Credits Earned, and Number and Percentage of High School Diplomas Awarded for Recovered and Prevented Dropouts Served, 1995-98

| | Number Served | | | Credits Earned | | | High School Graduates | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 |
| **Recovered Dropouts** | 518 (53%) | 465 (31%) | 476 (29%) | 1,140 (2.2) | 505 (1.1) | 510.5 (1.1) | 168 (32%) | 94 (20%) | 112 (24%) |
| **Prevented Dropouts** | 269 (27%) | 794 (52%) | 1,076 (66%) | 344 (1.3) | 961 (1.2) | 1,012.5 (.9) | 74 (28%) | 218 (27%) | 326 (30%) |
| **TOTAL** | 787 (80%) | 1,259 (83%) | 1,552 (96%) | 1,484 (1.9) | 1,466 (1.2) | 1,523 (1.0) | 242 (31%) | 312 (25%) | 438 (28%) |

Source: Campus DELTA Lab Teachers

As seen in Table 5, during each of the three years of program implementation, more than three-quarters of students served by the DELTA program were considered recovered or prevented dropouts. Additionally, the proportion of recovered and prevented dropouts served has increased each year. During the 1997-98 school year, more than 95% of students served were in this category. Of the 476 recovered dropouts served during the 1997-98 school year, 112 (24%) received a high school diploma. Recovered dropouts earned an average of 1.1 credits while in the program. The number of prevented dropouts served by the program increased four-fold from 1995-96 to 1997-98 (from 269 to 1,076), and the number of these students who graduated rose from 74 to 326 during that same period. The average number of credits earned by at-risk students tapered off slightly from the previous year (from 1.3 credits per student to .9 credits per student). As stated in the previous section, this decrease coincides with the program serving increased numbers of seniors who need fewer credits to graduate.

**Achievement Data**

In 1995-96, 1,286 DELTA students took the exit-level Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test. In 1996-97, 1,257 DELTA students took the test, and in 1997-98, 1,324 students took the TAAS test for the first time. Table 6 contains data on passing rates for TAAS test-takers among DELTA students from 1995-96 to 1997-98. Passing rates for each subtest are given by campus.

Table 6: Percent Passing TAAS Reading, Writing, and Math by School, 1995-98

| | Reading Mastery | | | Writing Mastery | | | Math Mastery | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 |
| **Anderson** | 65% | 74% | 83% | 63% | 74% | 86% | 54% | 58% | 75% |
| **Austin** | 60% | 68% | 81% | 60% | 68% | 80% | 51% | 56% | 74% |
| **Bowie** | 86% | 78% | 90% | 85% | 73% | 87% | 71% | 62% | 80% |
| **Crockett** | 84% | 80% | 88% | 87% | 76% | 86% | 66% | 67% | 71% |
| **Johnston** | 54% | 48% | 91% | 58% | 51% | 91% | 42% | 39% | 75% |
| **Lanier** | 69% | 73% | 83% | 66% | 72% | 79% | 60% | 64% | 74% |
| **LBJ** | 75% | 52% | 90% | 79% | 59% | 94% | 63% | 41% | 77% |
| **McCallum** | 61% | 73% | 82% | 69% | 75% | 82% | 54% | 65% | 71% |
| **Reagan** | 66% | 60% | 82% | 69% | 63% | 78% | 57% | 53% | 70% |
| **Travis** | 75% | 59% | 88% | 75% | 58% | 86% | 53% | 39% | 67% |
| **Total** | 69% | 67% | 85% | 70% | 67% | 84% | 57% | 55% | 74% |



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In Figures 1 through 3, exit-level TAAS results for DELTA program students are compared with district and state TAAS results for the three-year period.

Figure 1: Percentage of Students Passing Exit-Level TAAS Reading for the DELTA Program Only, the District, and the State, 1995-98

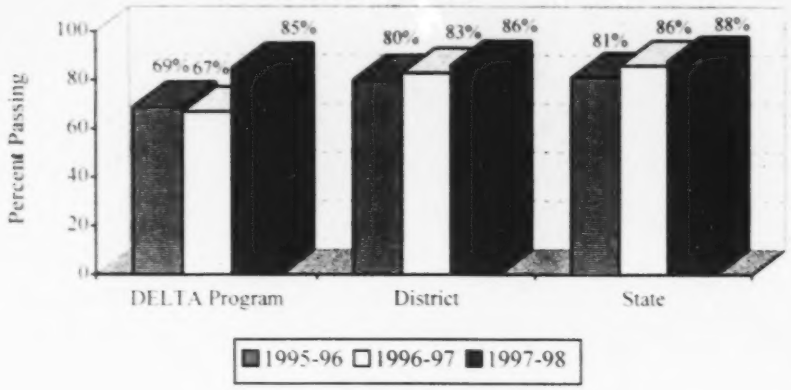



Figure 2: Percent Passing Exit-Level TAAS Writing for the DELTA Program Only, the District, and the State, 1995-98

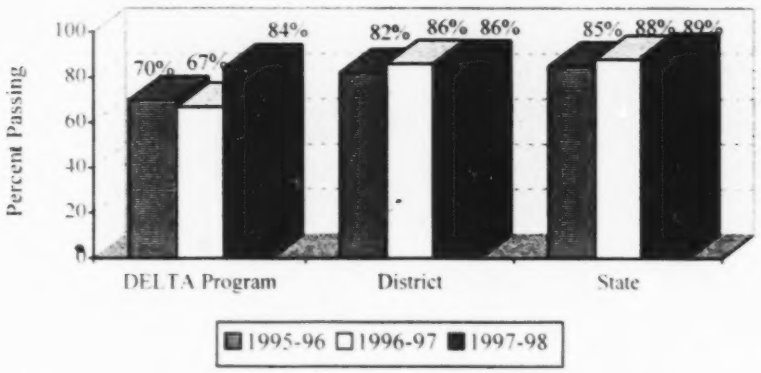
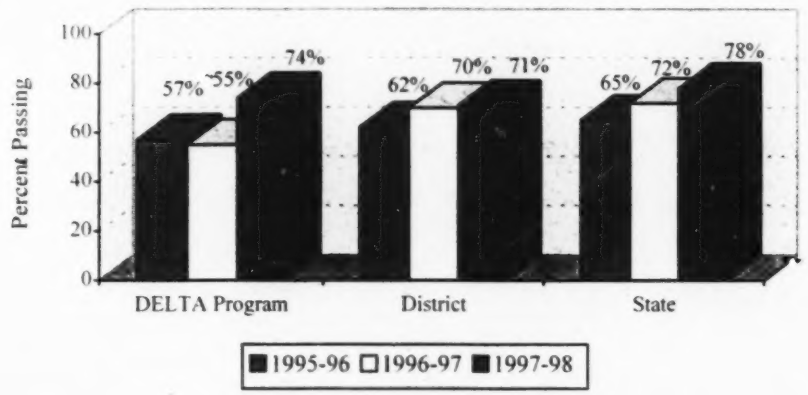



Figure 3: Percent Passing Exit-Level TAAS Math for the DELTA Program Only, the District, and the State, 1995-98

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- For the three-year period, passing rates for the reading subtest scores on the exit-level TAAS increased by 16 percentage points for students in the DELTA program, while scores increased by six percentage points for the district and seven points for the state during the same period.
- In 1997-98, the percentage passing the exit-level TAAS reading subtest scores for the DELTA program trailed the district average by only one point, and the state average by only three points.
- For the three-year period, passing rates for exit-level TAAS Writing increased 14 percentage points for DELTA program students, versus four percentage points for the district and the state.
- In 1997-98, the percentage passing the exit-level writing subtest for DELTA program students trailed the district average by only two points and the state average by five points.
- For the three-year period, passing rates for exit-level TAAS Math for DELTA program students increased 16 percentage points during the period, while district and state math subtest scores have risen 9 and 13 percentage points, respectively.
- In 1997-98, for the first time, the percentage passing exit-level Math for DELTA program students surpassed that of the district (73% compared to 71%).

The percentage of DELTA program students achieving mastery on each of the three TAAS subtests decreased slightly from 1995-96 to 1996-97. Passing rates in each subtest increased significantly, however, from 1996-97 to 1997-98.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Results over three years of implementation show a general increase in the number of students served by the DELTA program. The number of students served districtwide and at seven of the ten high schools has increased with each year of implementation. Additionally, the number of prevented dropouts served has also increased each year. Along with the increase in the number of students served came a slight decrease in the number of credits earned for both the total and the target populations. During its three years of implementation, the program has served increasing numbers of seniors who need fewer credits than other students in order to graduate.

The findings of this evaluation indicate that the DELTA program is successfully meeting the goals of serving the target population and helping recovered and prevented dropouts stay in school and earn high school diplomas. Recommendations are:

- for the program to continue;
- for the program to continue to serve the targeted student population;
- for the campus lab directors to continue to vary lab schedules in order to accommodate as many students as possible;
- for data collection methods to be improved so that program effectiveness can be better evaluated; and,
- for the scope of the program's evaluation to be expanded to include measures such as program cost and post-program outcomes for graduates and non-graduates.

# Austin Independent School District


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